

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ADMINISTRATIVE SITE RECONSTRUCTION
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FOREST
BALDWIN/WHITE CLOUD RANGER DISTRICT
BALDWIN, MICHIGAN

BACKGROUND

The Baldwin and White Cloud Ranger Districts are located in the southern half of the Manistee National Forest. Prior to 1992 they were independent administrative units, managed from separate offices in White Cloud and Baldwin. In an effort to reduce increasing administrative costs, these two units were combined under one District Ranger in 1992. This was followed by co-locating all district staff at the Baldwin Ranger Station in 1997.

To accommodate the combined staff, two existing housing units and a garage on the Baldwin compound were converted to office space. It was clear the modifications were only a temporary solution and, at some point in the future, updated facilities would be required. The 1936 era buildings are not designed to meet the current code standards for accessibility or energy efficiency, and they are not sufficient to house modern day equipment such as fire engines.

The current Huron-Manistee National Forests Facility Master Plan has identified the Baldwin administrative site as a location to be retained and redeveloped for continued use as a Ranger District office. In FY 2009, the Eastern Region of the Forest Service placed the project in the funded category for capital investment funds in 2010 thru 2013. A review of alternative locations for the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District office confirmed that the current Baldwin location best meets the needs of the unit, as well as, the community of Baldwin, Michigan.

DECISION

Based upon my review of the Administrative Site Reconstruction Environmental Assessment (EA), I have decided to implement Alternative 2, the proposed action which would redevelop the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District administrative site in the Village of Baldwin at the current location. The project would include:

Removal of all existing buildings on the west block between Cedar Street and Michigan Avenue.

(the office building, the two houses used as additional office space and the bunk house and two garages).

A new two story, 12,862 square foot, office building would be constructed on the reclaimed area. Attached to this building would be a 6,480 square foot, six bay garage for storage of fire engines and fire equipment.

On the east block between Cedar Street and Norway Street the four existing warehouse buildings (10,061 square feet total) would be refurbished and updated with new electrical, heating, insulation and plumbing. In addition a new 2,271 square foot, five stall garage/warehouse would be constructed along with a bunkhouse for 12 seasonal employees.

The overall plan for the site is to accommodate all permanent and temporary district employees (approximately 45 employees at the peak of field season) within one office building. The office building would include a 600 square foot reception area with public display space and public restrooms. The office space would include a large conference room that would be available for community use. Also included would be additional restrooms with showers for employees, a computer room, two small conference rooms, and a kitchen/break room.

Included in the site design would be a redesign of the parking areas, driveways and storm water drainage for the facility. Cedar Street between Lake Street and Sixth Street has been abandoned by the Village and would be closed to through traffic. The main access route into the administrative site would be from Lake Street at the intersection of Lake Street and Cedar Street.

All facilities developed on site would fully comply with accessibility and current building codes.

DECISION RATIONALE

The purpose of this proposed action is to redevelop the Baldwin/White Cloud Administrative site. This action is needed because the existing office and warehouse facilities are inadequate to meet present and future needs of the district. Reconstruction will address the following facility limitations:

- Costs of maintaining four separate buildings as office space is high. Service costs include maintaining multiple heating and cooling systems, more complicated utility system repairs and complex cleaning services.
- The current facility offers a poor environment for public interaction and creates a negative impression for office visitors.
- Employee office space is insufficient and does not comply with several key building code standards, including accessibility requirements under the Architectural Barriers Act.
- Space for public and employee parking is not sufficient, especially during the summer.
- The current facility provides limited space for visitor contacts and interpretive and educational displays.

- Lack of conferencing and training facilities.
- Existing seasonal employee and volunteer housing does not meet current code standards for employee housing.
- Current available space will not meet the anticipated staff changes in all disciplines expected over the next 50 years, the life expectancy of the facility.
- Current storage and warehouse facilities will not meet planned needs for upgrades to fire equipment and rolling stock.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Facility Master Plan, approved by Kent Connaughton, Regional Forester for the Eastern Region, on 11/20/2008. The desired future condition for the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District administrative site is described as: *"new administrative facilities are necessary. Some facilities may be retained, decommissioned, altered in use or acquired."* Specific planned actions outlined in this document include: Decommissioning the main office building, the fire office building, the converted house and garage office space, and the bunkhouse with garage; Retaining all four existing warehouse buildings as well as the oil shed and equipment shed; Acquiring a new office building, fire warehouse and garage, fire office, new garage/warehouse, and crew quarters.

The Administrative Site Reconstruction EA documents the environmental analysis and conclusions upon which this decision is based.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Huron-Manistee National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions and updated periodically during the analysis. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping initiated on April 15, 2010 and ending on May 15, 2010. In addition, as part of the public involvement process, the agency began working with the Village of Baldwin's Zoning Department on March 3, 2010 on review of a conceptual site plan. A conceptual site plan was approved by the Baldwin Planning Commission on April 26, 2010.

During the scoping process for this project the Forest received no comments from the general public.

During the 30 day review for the EA, two comments were received from the public. One comment was in support of the Forest Service redevelopment proposal as outlined in Alternative 2. One comment was opposed to any proposed redevelopment proposal, feeling that *"in the midst of a budget crisis the USFS wishes to demolish a perfectly good building to replace it with a new one. The old Bldg. is far from being in sad shape. It is a beautiful place and it needs not to be replaced."*

The EA lists agencies and people consulted on page 16. Copies of the public responses to the 30 day comment period are in the project file as is the response to comments.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The decision to reconstruct a new administrative facility is consistent with the intent of the Huron-Manistee National Forests Facility Master Plan. The project was designed in conformance with the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land Management Plan and the National Forest Management Act. This project will bring the facility into compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act and to bring it in line with county, state and federal building codes.

FINDINGS OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

These actions are site-specific and not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This determination is based on the following:

- There will be no significant effects, beneficial or adverse, as a result of implementing this project. The EA, pages 9-14, discuss the environmental consequences of implementing each alternative, including the selected alternative.
- Public health and safety are not significantly affected by the proposed action. A new administrative office meeting federal standards for universal access and life safety codes improves public health and safety.
- The new administrative site is not in proximity to prime farmlands, parks flood plains, wetlands historic or cultural resources, ecologically critical areas. There will be no adverse affects to any of these interest areas.
- The effects of implementing the actions on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial based on public and resource specialists' involvement.
- The proposed action effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risks as discussed in the EA, Environmental Consequences, pages 9-14.
- The new administrative office and site renovation does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effect or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration as stated in the Huron-Manistee National Forests Master Facility Plan.
- There are no known actions related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts as discussed in the Cumulative Effects section of each discussion in the Environmental Effects, pages 9-14.
- There are no known sites listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or affected by the proposed action as listed on page 13 of the EA.
- The proposed action will have no effect on any endangered or threatened species or habitat as determined by the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District Biologist.
- The proposed actions do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. All actions will be consistent with all state and local laws and forest plan standards and guidelines.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW (APPEAL) OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. A written notice of appeal must be submitted within 45 calendar days after the Legal Notice is published in the Cadillac News. However, when the 45-day filing period would end on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, then filing time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day. The date of the publication of the Legal Notice is the only means for calculating the date by which appeals must be submitted; do not rely upon any other source for this information. The Notice of Appeal must be sent to: USDA, Forest Service, Gaslight Building, Suite 700, 626 East Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53202. The Notice of Appeal may alternatively be faxed to: 414-944-3963, Attn: Appeals Deciding Officer, USDA, Forest Service, Eastern Regional Office. Those wishing to submit appeals by email may do so to appeals-eastern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Acceptable formats for electronic comments are text or html email, Adobe portable document format, and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications. Hand-delivered appeals may be submitted at the above address between 7:30 and 4:00 pm CT Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and may be filed by persons or non-Federal organizations or entities that provided comments or otherwise expressed interest in the proposed action by the close of the comment period.

Detailed records of the environmental analysis are available for public review at the Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District Office.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This decision will be implemented 5 business days after the close of the 45-day appeal period, or 15 days after the disposition of any appeal, whichever is later.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Leslie E. Russell, District Ranger, Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District, 650 Michigan Avenue, Baldwin, Michigan, 49304. The District phone number is 231-745-4631.

/s/ BARRY PAULSON

May 16, 2011

Barry Paulson

Date

Forest Supervisor

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